UNITED
NATIONS

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Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1997/392
23 May 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 23 MAY 1997 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to convey to you the attached letter dated 23 May 1997, which I have received from the Chargé d'affaires of the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations (see annex). Attached to the letter is the fourth bi-weekly report on the multinational protection force for Albania requested by the Security Council in resolution 1101 (1997) of 28 March 1997.

I should appreciate your bringing the text of the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kofi A. ANNAN

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Annex

Letter dated 23 May 1997 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to submit the fourth report on the multinational protection force for Albania (see appendix). The report is submitted pursuant to the requirement set out in paragraph 9 of Security Council resolution 1101 (1997) of 28 March 1997, in which the Council requested the Member States participating in the multinational protection force to provide periodic reports, at least every two weeks, through the Secretary-General, to the Council. The third such report was conveyed to you on 9 May (S/1997/362, annex).

I should be grateful if you could have the text of the present letter and the fourth report circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Giulio TERZI
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

Appendix

Fourth report to the Security Council on the operation of the multinational protection force in Albania

I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 28 March 1997, the Security Council adopted resolution 1101 (1997), in paragraph 2 of which it welcomed the offer made by certain Member States to establish a temporary and limited multinational protection force to facilitate the safe and prompt delivery of humanitarian assistance, and to help create a secure environment for the missions of international organizations in Albania, including those providing humanitarian assistance.

2. In paragraph 9 of the resolution the Security Council requested the Member States participating in the multinational protection force to provide periodic reports, at least every two weeks, through the Secretary-General to the Council. The first report was provided on 9 April 1997 (S/1997/296, annex), specifying inter alia, the parameters and modalities of the operation on the basis of consultations between Member States participating in the force and the Government of Albania; the second report was provided on 25 April 1997 (S/1997/335, annex); the third was provided on 9 May 1997 (S/1997/362, annex). The fourth report refers to events between 7 and 22 May 1997.

II. MULTINATIONAL PROTECTION FORCE

Political guidance

3. The Steering Committee, consisting of the political directors of the troop-contributing countries and the Commander of the operation, continues to follow the overall situation on the ground and the full compliance of the activities of the force with the mandate of the Security Council. It meets on a weekly basis. To date it has held regular meetings on 4, 9, 14, 23, 30 April and 6, 14 and 22 May.

4. A special meeting at the ministerial level was held in Paris on 13 May with the participation of the ministers for Foreign Affairs and of Defence of the troop-contributing countries.

5. Portugal, having formally decided to contribute to the force with a transport aircraft and its crew, joined the Steering Committee as of the meeting of 14 May. Belgium continues to attend the Committee meetings as an observer.

6. Representatives of the following international organizations regularly attend the meetings of the Steering Committee as observers: United Nations, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), European Union (EU), Western European Union (WEU) and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Cooperation with Albanian authorities

7. The Secretary of State to the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Pavli Zeri, attended the meeting of the Steering Committee on 14 May. He confirmed the full support of the Government of Albania for the multinational protection force operation and expressed appreciation for the humanitarian activities in the security framework provided by the force. He also provided the Committee with information about the situation in the country and its current political difficulties with regard to the process towards elections.

8. The Steering Committee intends to maintain constant contacts with the Albanian authorities, in particular the Central Commission established to serve as the interdepartmental point of coordination and contact with the force in Tirana.

9. Numerous meetings took place at the political level between members of the Albanian Government and authorities of the troop-contributing countries. The Prime Minister of Albania, Mr. Bashkim Fino, accompanied by several members of his Government, met in Rome on 10 May with the Italian Prime Minister, Mr. Romano Prodi, and corresponding members of the Italian Government for an overall evaluation of the situation.

10. At the local level, the force in several cases established contacts with district authorities and commanders of police stations.

Cooperation with international organizations

11. The Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Mr. Franz Vranitzky, paid several visits to Albania in an effort to promote political compromise towards holding parliamentary elections according to procedures acceptable to all parties. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) continue their child-polio vaccination campaign. A World Bank/International Monetary Fund (IMF) assessment mission arrived in Tirana in the first week of May. An advance party of the WEU mission for the advisory, training and support programme for the Albanian police started its activities in Tirana on 12 May.

12. The force continues to ensure the security framework for civil and humanitarian missions as well as for humanitarian convoys. Several United Nations agencies, including, among others, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Food Programme (WFP), UNICEF and WHO, as well as the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, are active in Albania and maintain operational contacts with the force as far as security is concerned.

Force deployment

13. The force has strengthened its military organization in Albania: acquisition of the main entry points has taken place and the completion of the deployment of the force contingents has been effected as planned without any inconvenience. The force is now progressively expanding the security framework throughout the country.

14. As of 22 May, the deployment of the force was completed at a level of 6,556 units. The Slovenian medical unit arrived in Albania on 16 May and was deployed in Rinas. The current deployment of the force is as follows: Austria, 115; Denmark, 59; France, 954; Greece, 788; Italy, 3,099; Romania, 399; Slovenia, 24; Spain, 344 and Turkey, 774.

Summary of operations

15. In carrying out its mandate, the force has gained control of many of the main roads and avenues of communication in Albania. A security framework is being provided to several civil and humanitarian convoys.

16. Reconnaissance missions, including some naval ones, airlifts and patrols have been carried out extensively in the north of Albania, in the central part of the country, as well as in the south. On 13 May reconnaissance missions began in the areas of planned expansion of the presence of the force in Albania.

17. Upon a request submitted to the Force Command through the Civil-Military Cooperation Committee, protection measures were undertaken in favour of WHO, UNICEF and several missions of non-governmental organizations travelling in Albania.

18. Assistance and protection for official visits continues to be provided as appropriate by the force.

III. CONCLUSIONS

19. The deployment of the force has had a positive effect on the overall security situation in Albania, as has also been repeatedly stressed by local authorities.

20. However, security problems continue in certain areas in the North of Albania, as well as in the South. Armed bands are still active, in particular during the night, and in some cases they impede the safe transit of assistance missions and humanitarian supplies.

21. On some occasions the force has faced situations in which its contingents have been fired upon, although no casualties have been reported.

22. Organized crime and racketeering are still creating obstacles to a full resumption of economic and social activities, in particular where police control is poor or non-existent.

23. The political situation in the country is a matter of concern, considering the efforts by the international community to assist in resolving the Albanian crisis.